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**ACCESSING A NOT FOR PROFIT ORGANIZATIONAL  
BRAND FROM THE VOLUNTEERS PERSPECTIVE  
– THE CASE OF REFOOD**

MAŁGORZATA HALINA SKRZYŃSKA

Student number (NOVA- School of Business and Economics): 2918

Student number (Warsaw School of Economics): 53997

A Project carried out on the Double Master in Management Program,  
under the supervision of:

Carmen Lages

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Case of Refood**

**Abstract**

This exploratory qualitative research developed through in-depth interviews with a not for profit organization (Refood) volunteers in order to determine its volunteers' perception about the organization's brand and whether that perception impacts on volunteer relationship with Refood.

Results showed that Refood is perceived to have strong brand elements and it is defined not only by its cause (end food wastage and feed the needed) but also by its volunteers' performance. Since volunteers' commitment depends on many factors, it may cause some difficulties on their relationship with the organizational brand.

The research suggests recommendations to brand managers on how to make the brand more meaningful to their current volunteers.

**Key Words:** volunteer, Refood, branding, not for profit

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## INTRODUCTION

While substantial study has addressed the problem concerning volunteers' motivation to work for a non for profit organization, less is known about how managers can improve its organizational brand value, elements and community. This qualitative research is about Refood, non profit organization that fights against food wastage in Portuguese society and provides a process to empower citizens to improve the world in their own communities.

Since the 2008 economic crisis, the decline in government support to social problems is visible (Graph 3), and citizens themselves looked for solutions, which resulted in increasing number of charities (Graph 4). This study examined how the Refood brand is perceived by its volunteer workers and how its volunteer managers can improve it. It means that value of the brand in eyes of volunteers will be evaluated, with the help of frameworks found in the branding literature: brand equity (Keller P. , 2003), brand personality (Aaker D. A., 1991) and brand elements (Keller et al, 2012). The project will also include work about brand communities (Muniz & O'Guinn, 2001) and reflect on the role of non for profit organizations based on IDEA's model (Kylander& Stone, 2012).

### **Part One: Literature Review**

**BRAND. Definition of a brand:** The brand is “a set of mental associations, held by the consumer, which add to the perceived value of a product or service” (**Keller K. L., 2008**)(p.5).The pillar for consumer-based definition was presented by Kapferer who described brand as “a name which influence the purchase and create relationship between a company and a customer” (**Kapferer, 2008**) (p. 9). Therefore, it can be concluded that the name of a brand is a declaration of the trust toward the brand which is created by mental associations.

In addition to academic definitions, we can find the perspective of the practitioners -the American Marketing Association (AMA)<sup>1</sup> which define a brand as:“a name, term, sign, symbol or design or a combination of them, intended to identify the goods and services of one seller (...) To differentiate them from competition ones.”

An analysis of the above mentioned definitions led us to conclude that AMA’s explanation focuses on the visible brand elements which are tangible attributes. However, those ones are only a part of the full perspective of the brand, due to the fact they are only the top of the iceberg (see Graph 1) with which the brand managers struggle. Everything that lies under its tip, is brand intangible assets which reflect to long-term vision of the organization. The brand is not only defined by its name, term, sign, symbol (AMA) but also through emotional dimension which is a sum of brand vision, mission, positioning, brand equity (Kapferer, 2008) in consumers’ minds (Keller, 1998) in order to create strong relationship.

Consumers have three main benefits from choosing strong brands: clear information about the brand (ex. name, attitude, quality, values) and its products (ex. utility, ingredients, flavour) (Aaker D. A., 1991) (p. 16). Secondly, perceived risk of purchase diminishes “through the persistence and repetition of their value proposition” (Kapferer, 2008) (p. 38-39). Thirdly, knowledge about the brand speeds up the choosing process. When deciding, a consumerism more likely to choose a brand which is reliable and trustworthy.

Having strong brand has the strategic importance for non for profit organizations. Firstly, it gives a better visibility on the market which attracts potential, commitment volunteers without which its mission will not be possible. Brand awareness influences on attracting talented people to join the organization. Additionally, powerful brands are trustworthy, which is

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<sup>1</sup> American Marketing Association Dictionary:  
<https://www.ama.org/resources/Pages/Dictionary.aspx?dLetter=B&dLetter=B>; Retrieved 2016-03-294

crucial element for non for profit brands to obtain support for its cause. Such a position creates favourable partnerships which can boost charity's development.

**Brand value creation.** The brand equity is “a set of brand assets and liabilities connected with the brand (name, symbols) which adds value to, or diminishes value from a product or service.” (Aaker D. A., 1991) (p. 15). Moreover, it can be translated into consumers' loyalty and then used as a performance measure just like market share and profitability (Kotler, Keller, Brady, Goodman, & Hansen, 2009). This concept involves five different categories of assets: brand loyalty, name awareness, perceived quality, brand associations and other proprietary assets (see Graph 2), however in this research there is a focus on non for profit brand, so ‘other proprietary assets’ were not taken into account.

The non for profit brand strives for having brand equity, which is designed by *value creation* of the synergy between beneficiaries, volunteers and the company (de Chernatony, Drury, & Segal-Horn, 2004) rather than by *value capture*. Since charities do not generates money, we cannot talk directly about brand equity but only about **brand value**, and this term will be used in the rest of this work. A consumer is able to express himself or herself through the consumption and use of brands, so the brand perception plays here a crucial role (Aaker D. A., 2002). It enables to project the brand's values and shape the image of typical user (de Chernatony & McDonald, 1998) which can be attributes to encourage consumer to be involved with the brand or the opposite– to avoid it.

One way to teach about what the brand stands for is using strong, clear and positive mental brand associations. In the literature, brand associations are “words which come to mind when the consumer hear the brand's name.” (Keller P. , 2003) (p. 419). Therefore, having strong brand associations determine the process of commitment and at the end, it can generate positive feelings toward brand (Aaker D. A., 2002). The service process shapes customers'

experience across touch points; however it is hard to measure. One possibility to diagnose advantages and flaws is a blueprinting method (Lovelock & Wirtz, 2007). It matches visible elements, the front stage, with operational activities, the back stage. Indeed, the core element of charities is the back stage which is characterised in the literature by: intangibility (Zeithaml, Parasuraman, & Berry, 1985), complexity, heterogeneity and “service process” (Ostrom, Iacobucci, & Morgan, 2005).

The complexity of social organization is enhanced by inseparability of two activities in services: delivery of the service (by brand) and its final consumption (by beneficiary/consumer). The social enterprise is providing intangible goods, or in other words a service, as an end product, and having a strong brand provides a certificate of quality which will be guarantee of the competence and standards (Keller P. , 2003) as a protection.

**Brand elements.** Brand elements are the parts that constitute the visible stimuli to the consumer by being deliberately developed by brand managers, including brand name, logo and related symbol (ex. Coca-Cola has a glass bottle, an iPhone is a symbol of Apple company). Those components should meet six criteria, which are described as: memorable, meaningful, likeable, transferable, adaptable and protectable. This study considers five critical brand elements: logotype, colour, slogans and jingles and spokespeople (Keller, Aperia, & Georgson, 2012),

Brand name. The brand name is responsible for providing information in order to shape consumer’s expectations (Ostrom, Iacobucci, & Morgan, 2005) but it is also crucial element to distinguish the company from others. As a rule of thumb, the brand name must be simple and easy to pronounce. All in all, it is a flagship of the company.

Logo and related symbols. Logos are graphic expressions of the brand (Suri, Kohli, & Thakor, 2002), which can be easily memorised by the customer. The aim is to increase the chance of



using familiar brand rather than non-branded one. Symbols are non-word elements which accompanies the logo. They contain deeper meaning and represent for instance cultural values or stereotypes, like wearing polo shirt is associated with a tennis player.

Slogans. Slogans are short phrases which contain some information intended at attracting consumers. For instance, Nike “Just do it”, Disneyland “The happiest place in the world” – both slogans are showing promise of the brand. Catchy slogans are used, especially in advertising campaigns, to strengthen the brand meaning and positioning.

Jingle. A jingle is a melody or full musical content which fulfil the story of the brand. Usually it indicates the brand benefits in non-direct way, for example Coca-Cola jingles are reminding about Christmas and time with the family.

Through the market analysis, companies must determine what needs and which clients they are trying to please and accordingly to that -set its visible components. Once the firm has identified its brand elements, it has to decide how to mix them in order to be appealing for target audience. For a service brand, all of them are significant; however the name is the only one which represents the value and main mission (Ostrom, Iacobucci, & Morgan, 2005).

**Brand knowledge.** Keller determined two perspectives of measuring a brand: brand awareness and brand image. Both of them influence on brand value through simulating divergent consumer subconscious (Keller K. L., 2008).

The brand existence in consumers’ mind is called **brand awareness**. It refers to “the ability to recognize or recall the brand in the spontaneous environment” (Percy & Rosenbaum-Elliott, 2013). It is created through brand exposition; brand repetition and having strong brand elements. The stage of awareness is divided into two subgroups: brand recognition, when a consumer has been exposed to the brand in the past and brand recall, when a buyer is able to link the brand with the category due to the better familiarity with it.

The second aspect of brand knowledge, which touches the associations kept in a consumer memory, is called **brand image**. The source for that can be created through the using the brand products or services or by collecting information about the brand from media. The more positive attachments are generated, the stronger is brand image which is affected by different brand associations (Keller K. L., 2008).

The brand identity is a heart of the brand which expresses self-image and potential of the company. It is a concept created inside the firm in order to evaluate purpose and mission and then translate desired core values into actions which will again affect the brand perception. Having corporate identity enables to be recognized as unique unit. Therefore, there is need to specify characteristics of a brand attributes (Kapferer, 2008) which will generate the brand value from the very beginning (Jean-Noël, 2008). To start create a brand and develop its strong position, the organization should be aware of its strength, benefits and based on that choose desired model to follow by. Two strategic options are available: from having a strong product and then identify its intangible values or from concept of values to specific product (which is typical for social organizations) (Kapferer, 2008).

**Brand communities.** The brand communities are “a functional, non-geographically bound community, based on a structured set of social relationships among admirers of a brand” (Muniz & O'Guinn, 2001)(p.1). Based on the academic literature, three factors distinguish and unite people (Muniz & O'Guinn, 2001). :

1. Conscious of kind, introduced by Gusfield (1978), which is based on the creation of connection between volunteers who do not know each other directly but cooperate together thought sharing stories
2. Shared rituals and traditions represented by symbols, activities, commitment in order to emphasize brand value by having a common goal of helping and improving environment

### 3. Sense of moral responsibilities

Brands like: Greenpeace and United Nations Children's Funds (UNICEF) satisfy both psychological and socio-cultural needs of volunteers and beneficiaries. These shareholders are creating brand communities with high level of loyalty and attachment to brand which emphasize the bond with the company. If people start sharing the common value, they will be not only a loyal but also supportive and active participants (Schultz & Jones Yang, 1997).

**The process of non for profit brand creation.** In order to achieve the competitive advantage among rivals, brand should act differently and stand up for its mission. The service performance is measured by brand values and the quality of service, speed and interactions with the audience. Nowadays, in fast-changing world, the interpretation of the company can be varied within different customer groups. To keep the consistent brand image, the positioning is unavoidable element which influences on long-term strategy. Through consistent brand communication and marketing activities, the strong position can be maintained and also differentiation achieved.

Processing not for profit brand can be made by using The IDEA framework (Kylander & Stone, 2012) which has an aim to align the contribution of the brand in order to sustain its social impact, follow its mission, value and culture. The model indicates the four source of pride: "brand integrity, brand democracy, brand ethics, and brand affinity".

Firstly, brand integrity has a goal to build common sense of helping among volunteers. This part enables to understand why company exists and why it does certain activities. It is crucial element to develop trust in shareholders.

Secondly, brand democracy is achieved by "the organization trusts its members, staff, participants, and volunteers to communicate their own understanding of the organization's main identity." (Kylander & Stone, 2012). That element is crucial in order to reduce tight control within company's structure.

Thirdly, brand ethics matches brand image and brand identity with represented values. Each action should highlight the ethical engagement.

Lastly, brand affinity is expressed through strong partnership and relationship with the others. It is a win-win situation in which both parties promote each other and take advantage of it.

**Not for profit organization.** The literature suggests that non for profit organizations can be defined from its functional perspective, since they are “guided by public-spirited altruists who seek only to serve the public interest” (**Weisbrod, 1988**)(p.3). In practice, charities play significant role in the society. Within the last couple years, the number of them has been growing. It is noticeable in developed countries affected by the crisis, and Portugal is one of them. Since 2009, the number of people who benefits from government decreased by around 6% (Graph 3). At the same time, there is a growth of small and medium-sized enterprises in sector of human health and social work activities (Graph 4) which indicated that people are using, more frequently, non government sources of help.

Furthermore, the statistics presents that 11.5 % of Portuguese population is involved into volunteering (**Portugal, 2012**). It means that more than 1 out of 10 people is indifferent about others lives. Analysing the socio-demographic characteristics, it can be assumed that committed volunteer has above average education degree and possesses a family (**Janoski, Musick, & Wilson, 1998**). However such a classification is not enough and the literature introduces four theoretical models of volunteer work (**Thoits & Hewitt, 2001**) in order to understand volunteer’s behaviour: volunteer motivations model, values and attitudes model, role-identity model, the volunteer personality model (see Table 1).

## **Part Two: Characterizing the object of study: Refood**

**Refood history and mission.** Refood, a 100% volunteer-based organization, was created in 2010. It has been growing from a one-man initiative to a more than 4000 volunteer

organization who serve over 46 000 meals per month. There are 51 centres and each one aims at solving two local problems: reduce waste of food and at the same time aid people with hunger<sup>2</sup>.

From the beginning, the company's mission is to engage the community to remove food waste and hunger. Complementary to that, the aim is to create new, better world in which, everybody have access to the proper amount of food. In their vision, residents are engaged in active participation to improve the local surrounding. Refood stays for equality, respect, inclusion, sustainability and optimism.

**The service specification.** “People are at the heart of the Re-food process, donating small amounts of their precious time to create value for others.”<sup>3</sup> It affects not only great partnership management but also volunteer commitment. From one side, the organization exists thanks to receiving food. Supply partners are responsible for **rescue** their excess food and donate it to collection team of Refood. From the other side, volunteers are the most crucial asset of Refood who maintain everyday tasks. There are two types of volunteers at Refood: managers, who have the main function “to allocate new volunteers to tasks and shifts and no responsibility for recruitment process” (3, Manager, female). Additionally, they are in charge of each shift to provide enough number of volunteers to prepare and serve the food and they are also responsible for explaining the mission and the purpose of the company. They create unity among participants and shape the spirit of commitment. Besides being manager, they are normal workers: “I am daily manager. Currently I am doing also food preparation” (12, Manager, female). Every week the volunteer does 2 hour shift at Refood and can be involved in one of the following tasks: collection the food from the resources (shops, restaurants, bakeries etc.) by walking or riding around the neighbourhood; packing the food which

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<sup>2</sup>Refood | Stop Waste - Feed People. (2015). Retrieved April 2, 2016, from <http://www.re-food.org/en/about/missionvisionvalues>

<sup>3</sup> Refood | Practical Action. (2015). Retrieved September 1, 2016, from: <http://www.re-food.org/en/how-it-works/practical-action>

involves repacking the food into small bags called “family pack”; distribution of the food directly to people with needs. Each person can play a volunteer and every volunteer has a right to choose the most suitable task to his/her personality.

**Refood elements.** The name “Refood” indicates the area of expertise. Furthermore, the brand has a visible position within the country by undertaken actions. The colour of its logo is not accidentally orange. It is a symbol of happy, social and friendly organizations (Clifford, 2015). Also direct dialogue on social media and also indirectly in publicity suggests the open and cheerful approach of Refood.

The most important shareholders for Refood are beneficiaries, people who are hungry or have food shortage and also volunteers who are the spokespersons of the brand. From the mission point of view, the volunteers are helping to solve the social problem which is the food wastage and food shortage at the same time.

### **Part Three: Methodology**

**Exploratory qualitative study.** The object of this project is to access the Refood brand from its volunteer’s perspective. The goal is to help Refood with recommendations to strength its brand next to its volunteers. Through this research, the participants’ commitment to Refood and participants perceptions about Refood brand elements will be checked. This exploratory qualitative model involves two stages: Problem statement and Procedures (Creswell, 2009).

The first phase holds the research questions, which led researcher to do this project (Creswell, 2009). It is especially important when few studies were made in the past. To complement this part, the academic literature suggests defining the purpose statement to understand what the intent is. It clearly indicates the objectives of the research. Moreover, qualitative purpose statement “contains information about central phenomenon explored in the study” (Creswell,

2009)(p.114). The statement of the problem can be further refined into set of questions called research questions.

The second phase contains a series of procedures to be followed which applies different assumptions concerning the strategy of inquiry which includes the role of researcher, methods of data collection, data validation and interpretation.

**Research Questions.** The non-profit organizations are up-to-dated topic, since the results of economic crisis in 2008 are still visible in Portugal. The problem became a national issue which has impact on social care. In order to help people with needs, ReFood came against this problem. However, the organization needs workers who are responsible and committed to generate social impact. At the beginning of the study the focus is on understand the current relationship between the organizational brand ReFood and the volunteers of this not for profit organization. In a second phase, the study tries to identify what crucial factors influence the volunteers' perception of the brand and motivate them to commit to ReFood as volunteers. In consideration of the aforementioned, two research question were posed in this study:

1. How do volunteers perceive the brand of their not for profit organization?
2. How do volunteer managers can improve the current brand situation?

The respondents were asked about their story concerning the beginning of their relation with ReFood (see Table 3). Then a list of themes was provided with references to the main literature. The research questions were structured into multiple subcategories connected with the research problem. According to the Kern's Rule, this project covered no more than 6 themes discussed in the previous chapter:

1. What was the main reason why you decided to be a volunteer at ReFood?
2. How can you describe your relationship with the brand?
3. What ReFood values are important for you?

4. What makes Refood unique and different from other organizations?
5. Being a part of the Refood is more about individual experience or group experience?

To solve these questions, the qualitative study was carried out to understand how Refood organizational brand is perceived by its volunteers and to verify if that brand perception has any influence on the volunteers' relationship with Refood (ex: commitment to their volunteering tasks). The ultimate goal is to provide recommendations to brand managers on how to make the brand more meaningful to their current volunteers. It allows Refood to better fulfil its mission and have as much impact as possible on the community.

**Fieldwork Procedures.** Ensuring quality, the researcher has been looking 4 months (January - April 2016) for information concerning non-for-profit organizations and also on learning about Refood. When necessary data has been collected, the interview guide was prepared.

The fieldwork consisted of 15 in-depth interviews with volunteers of Refood implemented from May to June 2016 in Lisbon, Portugal (to see details, please check table 5). Lisbon, the capital of Portugal, was chosen to be the cornerstone of the data collection, as the organization's activity is more significant in Lisbon.

In-depth interview. For this project, in-depth interviews were the principal method of data collection for three reasons. Firstly, qualitative interviewing is used to understand, at a holistic level, human motivation to be committed to Refood since the purpose of those type of interviews is “to co-create meaning with interviewees by reconstructing perceptions of events and experiences related to it” (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006)(p. 316). Secondly, face-to-face interview boosts credence with respondents and last but not least, it encourages to describe own stories and share personal experience which can bring a new dimension of the problem (Creswell, 2009). During the whole process, the role of the researcher is to listen (Brikci & Green, 2007), which is the reason why the whole interview should be recorded.



To obtain the best results, the investigator needs to ask “in a neutral tone of voice” (Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2009)(p.332). Additionally, an attempt was making “to leave sensitive questions until near the end of an interview because this allows a greater time for the participant to build up trust and confidence in the researchers” (Healey & Rawlinson, 1994). The contextual data should be taken into consideration (Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2009) which can help data analysis in the future, namely: the place of the interview; the date and time; the background information about the participant (e.g. role, hobbies, gender).

The chief advantage of this method is receiving clarified and sensitive information concerning participants’ hidden motives. Through open-ended questions, respondents have flexibility in answering and sharing all valuable information which provide a deeper insight.

The main disadvantage is that in-depth interviews are time-consuming because of the long process of gathering and analysing a big volume of data. Additionally, the results obtained from the small sample are applied to the whole population, which is generalizing results.

Furthermore, to enrich collected information and to introduce relaxing atmosphere, projective technique was used. In academic literature, it means that in order to access unconscious attitudes and motivations of respondents (Dichter, 1960) some non-direct questions were asked, which enhanced respondent to more honestly talk about issues as a third person.

In practise, The Association for Qualitative Research<sup>4</sup> defines the projective technique as a “wide range of tasks and games in which respondents can be asked to participate during an interview or group, designed to facilitate, extend or enhance the nature of the discussion.” This interview incorporated two different techniques. First one is called “Association” where the subject indicates its first association (Burns & Lennon, 1993) “When I say: *Refood*, what is the first word that comes in to your mind?” (see Table 3); another one which was used is

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<sup>4</sup> <https://www.aqr.org.uk/glossary/projective-and-enabling-techniques>

“Brand Personification” which presents sets of human attributes associated with the brand (Aaker 1997) : “If *Refood* was a person, what characteristics would it have?” (see Table 3)

Sampling. Due to the fact that Refood is constituted by 100% volunteers, as it was mentioned earlier, a theoretical sampling technique was applied. Sampling procedures were influenced by time constraints and in some cases it was built on a convenience sample procedure and in other cases on the snow-ball method (Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2009), as some respondents felt committed enough to give me their contacts.

To select knowledgeable respondents, filters were used (please see Table 2). The main criteria were: the ability to speak English, since the researcher is Polish and does not speak Portuguese, and also the minimum period of being a part of Refood organization for at least 3 months. Such a period of time is necessary to select people who have already experience and were able to develop relationship with the brand. Exceptionally, ex-volunteers, who were at Refood for at least three months, were interviewed in order to understand why they resigned.

At the end, the research sample included both groups in a given proportion: 12 volunteers and ex-volunteers and also 3 people at managerial position.

Data analysis. Qualitative research provides “non-numerical data which should be carefully analysed to developing future theory from collected data” (Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2009) (p.480). To not omit any information, all interviews were recorded and the transcription was made immediately after each one. Answers were written down, including adding the identification of each speaker: the number of interview, then occupied position (Manager or Volunteer) and the gender was defined (female, male).

Data analysis approach is based on the thematic analysis which is “identifying, analysing and reporting patterns (themes) within data. It organises and describes collected data set in detail” (Braun & Clarke, 2006)(p.79). The analysis process was executed manually which was a

time-consuming procedure. In order to fasten and make sure to not lose the focus on substantial information, some data collected from participants were deliberately excluded due to no link with the whole research, ex. some secondary stories about personal life.

**Main Limitations.** First, the number of respondents in the project (15) was small. However, since the theoretical sample was used, we stopped adding participants when no more new data was being added by the next person. Secondly, the research included only volunteers from capital of Portugal, from communities that were easily accessible and people have more open minded approach than those who live in smaller cities. This makes impossible to apply finding to all Refood units. Thirdly, data were collected only from English speaking volunteers. However, most of the respondents were Portuguese and English is not their mother tongue which can cause reliability bias.

#### **Part Four: Findings**

**Volunteer profile:** Although respondents had different educational background, majority of them achieved at least the Bachelor Degree, which suggests that the educational level might influence on promoting proactive engagement with social life. In addition to that, majority of respondent reported having background at volunteering prior to Refood. Among participants, four of them admitted that this was the first time they joined non for profit organization but it was a self-directed reason, connected with the curiosity and willingness to try something new.

Analysing answers from Table 4, demographic profile reveals that rarely past experience of family members impacted on people's decision to join Refood. It can be said that volunteers are either motivated by friends or internally driven to be the part of the Refood project.

Furthermore, people 50+ year old seem to have more willingness and interest for helping others: *“At certain point in life your priorities have been changed and you want to help other and see it.”* (7, Volunteer, female)

**Brand values:** When asked about Refood brand values -- equality, respect inclusion, sustainability and optimism --, none of the participants were aware of them. However, enquired about “what could be the significant Refood values?”, respondents answered with similar concepts: equality, respect, optimism and additionally: integrity, responsibility and credibility. Those attributes are seen as a huge advantage: *“I like to see that there is a lot of integrity and unity between volunteers no matter of age, everyone is friendly.”* (5, Volunteer, female); *“The very first is optimism, the fact that we believe that we can make a difference and everyone else can believe in that. The other things are that it is so inclusive: no matter age, gender, nationality. Respect for each one is additional”* (6, Manager, female); *“Respect and tolerance for other people, people are equal. Everyone with need - will receive the food. The unique mission is a huge value”* (15, Volunteer, male). This extraordinary mission differentiates the brand among other charities: *“The concept is unique. This is the only institution which collects the food and redistributes it”* (3, Manager, female)

Regarding the main drivers to become a volunteer at Refood, respondents rarely cited a single motivator. In addition to the merits of the mission and helping other, the need for personal fulfilment was pointed out as a reason for volunteering. Other reasons to become a Refood volunteer included: avoiding waste, feeling useful and having valuable social contacts.

Finally, convenience of proximity to place where they are spending normal time was presented as a motivation to become a volunteer: *“I really wanted to find some volunteer work to do, and then the unit was close to my university so I knew that I can be reliable and go there every week”* (5, Volunteer, female)

Furthermore, brand value is affected by quality of service at each stage (from collecting food, through preparation and at food delivery): *“Everything is controlled and labelled to know when we collected food and which restaurant had provided it. So I think the quality is really a*

*strong point” (14, Volunteer, male); “It is from a deep heart of the people, the preparation stage. People do what they can the best” (4, Volunteer, female)*

The possibility to try different roles also was significant factor for making long-term commitment at Refood: *“So... One thing I like to do .. If it is possible.. To make tour around different positions.. I did food packaging and collecting. I never tried distribution, but I believe that it is the hardest position because you are dealing with people. Anyway, it is good to try different positions, and when you feel bored, you can change it. I guess this is one of the reasons why so many people stayed at Refood for so long.” (5, Volunteer, female)*

To conclude, the project presented that being a Refood volunteer has two main benefits: individual and social. The first one appeal to academic literature (Thoits & Hewitt, 2001) since it allows gaining practical experience, getting in touch with inner humanity, increasing: self-esteem, confidence, satisfaction. The second aspect permits helping others, meeting different group of people, having direct impact on society and shaping new friendships.

**Brand Elements:** The main brand elements founded at Refood are: name, logo and related symbols, colour and spokespeople which is align with academic literature (Keller, Aperia, & Georgson, 2012). According to (Aaker D. A., 1991) the brand has significant information about itself presented in the name. Respondents easily recognized the name of Refood and what is more, they immediately related it with reduction of food waste. Some other mental associations with the brand name are: community, feeding people, reusing.

In terms of brand logo (Figure 1), two colours were immediately indicated. Black and Yellow are associated as colours of the Refood; however, not everyone recalled the logo itself. Mainly, workers described the logo as a good element since it easy to remember and to recognize. Nevertheless, most of volunteers added that they are not paying attention to this element. Symbols seem to be more relevant, two of them were mentioned: a bike and Hunter

Holder<sup>5</sup>. Both are deeply rooted in the volunteers' minds and are associated with the value of commitment, especially among those who have been working there for at least 1,5 year.

Basically, no slogans were found. Only one participant suggested that the expression: *"Let's work"* could boost workers attention to do their volunteering work.

The main source of brand knowledge about Refood is friends. It seems that spokespeople play crucial role. Students mentioned also universities which co-operate with Refood, internet and knowing the founder Hunter Holder. Human factor is critical in terms of communication which included channels like: Facebook, newspapers and word-of-mouth.

**Brand Associations:** By asking in non-direct way about personal characteristics, the research revealed that managers and volunteers have similar perception about Refood **human attributes**: social and active, helpful, caring about others, nice, happy and generous person. Current volunteers many times mentioned Hunter Holder, as an example of such a person.

Comparing Refood to an **animal** revealed that small disparity about Refood brand personality perceptions exists. Ex-volunteers perceived Refood as a calm dog, not aggressive one.

Although current workers also mentioned friendly dog but the examples of wild animals appeared, as an example the Camel was indicated, which is *"Saving food"* (15, Volunteer, male) and Elephant due to organization size and complexity of activities across units.

**Brand relationship:** Brand relationship enforces loyalty among volunteers to commit their time to the Refood. Refood attracts not only Portuguese people but also international students. This brand links citizens without geographical barriers. What is common for everyone is supporting the cause of preventing food wasting and understanding the mission of Refood: *"It is mostly focus on not wasting food, not on helping feed people. I just think it is a good consequence of that, but they cannot say that preventing hunger is the main goal."* (2,

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<sup>5</sup> Hunter Holder is the founder of the Refood in Portugal

*Volunteer, female*); *“it is a wonderful mission. The mission is to stop waste, it is an environmental issue. I think that mission is ambitious but wonderful.”* (8, *Volunteer, male*).

Brand Satisfaction is not aligned with the brand relationship. People are generally satisfied, especially after finishing shift, but level of evaluation varies. For those who have deeper bonds with the brand, Refood became a symbol of responsibilities and commitment; but the relationship maintains complex, since asked about describing brand relationship, another half of respondent did not feel attached to the brand. Small internal problems have been noticed. For example, *“Not everything is clear and align with the strategy”* (2, *Volunteer, female*), Volunteer group complaint also about lack of transparency and missing feedback about their work: *“(…) Maybe some reports with the final results, which would motivate me more”* (15, *Volunteer, male*) and from managers point of view, administrative issues such as bureaucracy sometimes occur.

As it was mention in the literature (Lovelock & Wirtz, 2007) choosing the right people to the right position is pivotal to build the relationship between brand and volunteers which enables to gain brand loyalty. Since it is possible to do job rotation, common responses indicate that people are pleased with occupied function which definitely boosts commitment and effectiveness of their volunteering work.

Refood is defined not only by its cause but also by its people involved into social work and those who actively participate: *“Besides helping others, you meet people. Good friendship. It is always a nice way to meet people and make some connections... and this feeling that you are helping others”* (13, *Volunteer, female*); *“People and our atmosphere at the unit, nothing special in the brand”* (9, *Volunteer, female*). Besides aforementioned, volunteers do not have any special expectation from the brand itself. The brand mission is the most significant prospect when it comes to Refood.

**Brand communities:** President's Task Force on Private Sector Initiatives (1982) introduced that: "Volunteering is an act of sacrificing of free time into extra-curricular activity in order to provide help to the community". Through volunteering the social capital can be created which build a trust and cooperation among people (Putnam, 2000). This study collected evidence that volunteers at Refood are creating that kind of Brand Community which share tradition and lifestyle: *"We sharing passion and values with others"* (10, Volunteer, female); have common sense of moral responsibilities: *"Most of the people work and they do not have time [to meet after shift]...anyway (...) People are just connected because of the common cause."* (13, Volunteer, female) and also conscious of kind: *"We are a little bit gossiping [during shift], catching up with some stories from past week, some small talks about common things."* (5, Volunteer, female) (Muniz & O'Guinn, 2001).

To sum up, the brand satisfies both: psychological and social needs of volunteers since participants feel more confident about themselves, and ex-workers believed that social work made them a better person.

**Creating Refood organizational brand:** The brand was created by Hunter Holder vision of the world "where everyone has the food that they need; where all of the food produced goes first to feed people; where citizens participate actively in the management of precious community resources, and where everyone assumes his or her power, right and obligation to transform the world into a better place<sup>6</sup>." This vision was disseminated by activities taken by managers. They admitted that this position is sometimes stressful and limits their free-time, although it gives them satisfaction. With regard to brand processing by coordinators, the IDEA practise was checked. The results showed that sine managers are more engaged into creation of **integrity** by being an exemplary, mission-oriented worker: *"I think people here*

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<sup>6</sup> <http://www.re-food.org/en/about/missionvisionvalues>



*are happy. I see it in my team. People are here to do the same mission” (3, Manager, female);*  
*“I am personally very engaged into each shift. People can feel it and I can feel that they are*  
*more motivated” (12, Manager, female)*

From Managers perspective, the main advantage of being a volunteer at Refood is gaining experience, developing organizational skills and being familiar with local community: *“You are more aware of your community; you have broader perspective of your environment” (1, Manager, female)*. Having these in mind, they are shaping brand **ethics** and brand **affinity**, since volunteers have rooted brand values (as it was mention earlier): *“I do not want to have only volunteers that come here to check some exercises in their schedule; I want to develop the commitment and sense of responsibility. (...)” (12, Manager, female)*

Refood meets 3 criteria of IDEA framework, the brand **democracy** aspect exists only partially since the organizational needs are not always clearly explained. Some of respondents are not aware or do not understand the amount of responsibility and managers noticed that: *“I am really upset. People do not understand the mission of not wasting food.” (1, Manager, female)*

## **Part Five: Final Conclusions & Main Recommendations**

This report has shown that the volunteers’ commitment to Refood brand is strong. The high-priority aspect is to understand motives to become a volunteer, however even if the number of studies, about this topic has been growing, there is no clear answer to that question since conclusions of each one varies. Difficulty to determine one interpretation arises from convenience samples and declarative responses. Nonetheless, the research question has an aim to answer the research question:

1. How do volunteers perceive the Refood brand?

This project indicated that commitment, among Refood volunteers, is influenced not only by the willingness to help others but also by meeting friends and having fun. If the brand community is created (which will be explained at the end of this chapter) people are more eager to participate in social work.

The discussion concerns participants' perception about Refood brand elements: name, logo, jingles, symbols, spokespersons and the activities undertaken by an organization. The literature indicated that the name is the key asset which shows brand identity (Ostrom, Iacobucci, & Morgan, 2005) and also represents the value and main mission. The "Refood" is associated with its mission, which is aligning with the academic literature. The brand image is coherent among workers and it is associated with positive feelings (kindness, helpfulness, happiness, generosity).

The answer to second research question is based on understanding volunteers' perception:

## 2. How do volunteer managers can improve the current brand situation?

The possibility to enforce brand perception can be made by small steps according to IDEA framework (Kylander & Stone, 2012). The main focus of structure is to align the contribution of the brand to increase social impact. To do those four steps should be followed:

- Improving brand integrity build common sense of helping. Currently, Refood brand benefits are strong however volunteers complained about poor transparency, since not everyone is able to see results of its work. From volunteers perspective it has an impact on losing motivation to make an effort. In order to dismiss this bias, clear communication is needed. It can be done by having semi-annual meetings with managers and volunteers where the company situation is presented. Additionally, there is a need to provide reports, to each worker, with number of people who received the help. As well, it is crucial to reveal all data concerning: number of new volunteers and overall table with hours sacrificed by volunteers

per month. It is clear signal that the time which is given to Refood is productive. However, those information are significant not only for volunteers but also for management team.

Having comparison between units, the managers see performance of each team and then share good practises and learn volunteers new skills, since one of motivator to join Refood was to gain experience.

- Enforcing brand democracy which is “a participative process that engages people through the organization and beyond the organization’s boundaries” (Kylander & Stone, 2012). At Refood there is a complication with understanding why brand exists and why it does certain activities. To avoid it, managers should be trained to be acquainted with organizational needs. Some coordinator admitted that have received offer for this position accidentally. Lack of clear communication creates bias since management team does not know how to shape the brand and for what the brand stands for. This is the reason why most of respondents were not able to identify brand values. Lack of responsibility among volunteers is the result of not understanding importance of each activity. The introduction session with explanations of the Refood purpose and also regular trainings to remind the importance of each position. Those workshops could be also a great opportunity to share brand practises to improve work efficiency.

- Highlighting ethical engagement, which means that brand ethics matches brand image, brand identity and also desired values. The project presented that the brand image is coherent and brand values are perceived similarly. Clearly, from the perspective of volunteers, some of the following Refood brand elements are meaningful: name, logo (see Figure 1), spokespersons, and symbols(see Figure 2). Nonetheless the logo can be leveraged by the management team, since not everyone remembered how it looks like. The logo itself should be more visible. One idea is to have more stickers into Refood unit to help memorise it. The

next recommendation is to create a partnership with another company to gain some gadgets with company logo.

Regarding other brand elements, the slogan should be disseminating among volunteers. Only one person indicated that “Let’s work” is a sentence which motivates the team to do their tasks. However, the popularisation of this slogan is in managers’ intention by repeating it all over and encouraging volunteers to work. The next great tool to build brand engagement is jingle, a musical message enables memorising due to catchy nature (Yalch, 1991). Emotional response to music generates favourable attachment. Additionally, it permits to strengthen recognition, regardless of the feelings evoked (Kellaris, Cox, & Cox, 1991). For a Refood, this form introduces more fun and lifestyle approach which is significant for volunteers (most of respondents indicate on importance of having a positive atmosphere during the shift). The jingle should incorporate brand name (Refood) and slogan (Let’s work). It would be better to implement this part with an external agency, pro bono.

- Displaying brand affinity to build a trust and later establish brand community.

Shaping brand community is necessary to engage people mentally and have invisible bond between volunteers and the brand. Nowadays, in order to have loyal base of users, companies are boosting brand communities. The purpose is to translate authentic story of the company to have ongoing feedback and support from users. It is boosting an unique value of a brand. The Playstation did it through creating a platform where people can connect and share content, the Greenpeace has different actions which involve engagement of each participant. My recommendation for Refood is to organize big event with restaurant owners, market representatives and volunteers to give people the spirit of community belonging. It also improves mutual relations. Having brand community is significant factor for most participants as a reason to stay at Refood. Refood can be perceived as a one that enables meeting new friends and supports beneficiaries.

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